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Hon. Saml. H. Walley.  
with respects of Author.

Ashfield, Mass.



Rev. Mr. Richards's Sermon,

AT THE

**INSTALLATION OF REV. WILLIAM H. GILBERT,**

DECEMBER 3, 1851.





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Ministerial Duties and Immunities.

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A

# S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE

INSTALLATION OF REV. WILLIAM H. GILBERT,

OVER THE

FIRST PARISH IN ASHFIELD, MASS.,

DECEMBER 3, 1851.

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BY GEORGE RICHARDS,

Pastor of Central Church, Boston.

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B O S T O N :

PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 42 CONGRESS STREET.

1851.

Ashfield, December 4, 1851.

REV. GEORGE RICHARDS,

*Dear Sir,*—Believing that a wider circulation of the interesting and appropriate suggestions in the Sermon you delivered at the recent settlement of our Pastor would be highly useful, we would respectfully request a copy of the same for publication.

SIDNEY BROOKS,  
EPHRAIM WILLIAMS, } *Prudential Committee*  
JOSEPH VINCENT, JR., } *of the*  
                                  *First Parish in Ashfield.*

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Boston, December 8, 1851.

GENTLEMEN,

The Sermon preached at the Installation of your Pastor, and which your charitable judgment has deemed worthy of publication, I submit to your disposal.

Very respectfully, your Friend,

GEORGE RICHARDS.

MESSRS. SIDNEY BROOKS,  
EPHRAIM WILLIAMS,  
JOSEPH VINCENT, JR.,

*Prud. Com. of the First Par. in Ashfield.*

# SERMON.

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ACTS vi. 4.

WE WILL GIVE OURSELVES CONTINUALLY TO PRAYER, AND TO THE MINISTRY  
OF THE WORD.

AN inspired commentary on the apostolical commission! A schedule, positive and negative;—including what belongs, excluding what does not belong to the sacred office.

Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. Though he tasted death for every man, to no man was that death available but to such as penitently relied upon its merits;—‘He that believeth shall be saved.’

But Christ’s residence on earth was local,—the vast majority of the race lived in utter ignorance both of his person and his credentials. How should they believe in Him of whom they had not heard? How should they hear without a preacher? How should they preach except they were sent? Hence



the Apostles and their commission — ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature!’

Eleven men, sustained by the promise, ‘Lo, I am with you always,’ set on foot that sublime crusade of mercy, beginning at Jerusalem. Their efforts were successful. The number of the disciples was multiplied. Jews and Greeks, Pharisees and Publicans, persons of origin, character, habits, the most diverse, renounced their hereditary creeds and systems, and became obedient to the Faith. Dissension was the consequence. The internal policy of the church, which it had been easy to administer when its numbers were small and homogeneous, became suddenly perplexed and intricate.

There arose, for instance, a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration — did not receive their just proportion of the charity fund. What was to be done? The Apostles called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, ‘It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables’ — neglect the preaching of the Gospel to distribute alms. ‘Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;’ — the earliest allusion

to the office of Deacons, their election by the church, their consecration by the Apostles.

And now, the Text.

BUT WE WILL GIVE OURSELVES CONTINUALLY TO PRAYER, AND TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD !

We — being rid of superfluous calls and claims, of extra-official occupations, secular labors being devolved on secular hands — will give ourselves, continually, exclusively, to the duties that pertain to our vocation, to Prayer and to the Ministry of the Word.

Here, then, under the broad seal and sign manual of Heaven, is the charter of MINISTERIAL DUTIES AND MINISTERIAL IMMUNITIES ! To the Law and to the Testimony !

I. In the first place, ministerial DUTIES. What *does* properly belong to the sacred office ?

*Prayer* and *Preaching*, with the collaterals and incidentals which these twain involve.

*Preaching* is the distinctive function of the ministers of Christ. He was a Preacher. He made frequent and formal proclamation of that kingdom, to whose crown He was the Heir. His discourses are constantly alluded to, and in some instances recorded, — models for the preachers of all ages.

The Apostles, first his companions on his circuits, afterward sent out two and two, preached

saying, 'The kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' They were succeeded by the Seventy, sent also two and two, into every city and place whither He himself would come, to say, — 'The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.' Still later, immediately subsequent to his resurrection and immediately anterior to his ascension, he uttered and repeated the more formal apostolical commission, — 'Go — preach the gospel — teach all nations!'

The Eleven acted, at once, on these instructions, and daily, in the temple and in every house, in synagogue and market-place, before the people and before the Sanhedrim, ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. Paul, their subsequent coadjutor, was *the* preacher of Christianity. 'Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.' 'Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach.' 'Necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel.'

No minister acts up to the spirit of his commission, who does not make Preaching his grand instrumentality: preaching — the just, lucid, comprehensive exhibition of that system of which the cross is the radiant centre! Of course, to exhibit truth we must understand it. The Apostles were inspired, and relied on supernatural aid. It was to



be given them in that same hour what they should speak. Denied supernatural illumination, their successors must supply the lack by study.

The Bible is the Text Book.

First to be penetrated is the shell of dead and forgotten tongues—Hebrew, Chaldee, Greek. Next are the obscurities of manners, habits, customs, places, characters—the result of antiquity, distance and national peculiarities.

The Book of Genesis carries us back six thousand years. It relates events most of which occurred ages before the book was written. Its scenes are laid in Mesopotamia, Palestine, Egypt, Arabia, often we know not where.

We open to Exodus, and are at once among the pyramids, treading the shores of the Red sea, entranced at the cragged and awful base of Sinai, threading the mazes of the wilderness, cooling ourselves at the well of Jacob.

We turn to the pages of Daniel. Around, far as eye can reach, spreads the metropolis of Chaldea. We are stunned with its confusion of tongues, swayed to and fro by the ebb and flow of its countless population.

We pass on to the Gospels. Again, the scenery is shifted. We are in Palestine. The Canaanites are gone. The Patriarchs sleep in Hebron. A generation has arisen that knew not Joseph. Rome,

sprung up but yesterday upon the Tiber, is mistress of the world, the East her tributary. Herod is on the throne of David. A new temple supplants the old. The Man who meets us—a mob environing his footsteps, their dark, malignant visages in strange contrast with his heavenly countenance—is the Messiah of Eden, on his way to the anguish of the cross.

Can such a book—library rather, a perfect kaleidoscope of shifting images—be cursorily read, read in the guise of a new tongue, by eyes strangers to the distant and the past, and yet adequately understood? It is impossible.

Collecting around him such aids as his own narrow means afford, with the added stores which ampler resources may contribute—let him that heareth understand!—the Minister is to search the Scriptures, line by line, word by word, till the very letters seem alive, and the dead, cold tongues glow and burn, like those of Pentecost!

But the Bible investigated literally, must also be investigated Logically!

A system of faith, scientifically developed, built up into formularies, buttressed by syllogisms, appears nowhere on the surface, but it is under it. Such system is the marrow of the Bible. The nature and attributes of God; the origin, character and necessities of man; sin, its guilt, its curse, its

remedy; regeneration, sanctification, salvation, — these *are* the Bible. A revelation, and nothing revealed, or next to nothing; or truths revealed only to be buried and forgotten; or truths valued and remembered, that cannot be stated and defined, cannot be classified and arranged, cannot be built into one harmonious whole — a Christianity, in a word, without a Creed — too feeble to command the intellect, is too false to win the heart.

The materials provided, every Minister is to be his own architect. Aided, to be sure, by the strong heads and warm hearts that have preceded him — aided, above all, by the enlightening Spirit, he is to solve the momentous question, ‘What shall I believe?’ That settled, he knows what he is to teach. He is to teach what he believes. Is it not a reason of the ill success of sermons, in carrying the convictions of the hearer, that they but half convince the preacher? Too indolent, perhaps, to labor, or fearful of fanning a latent scepticism, or content with second-hand opinions, the cast-off and threadbare legacy of bygone generations, he begs, or borrows the creed he should construct, and preaches a faith, current, time-sanctioned, orthodox, it may be, but not his own. To be effective teachers, we must be independent learners. The coin we issue must bear the stamp of our own likeness; traces, at least, of our own fingers. Our convictions



must be *our* convictions ; honestly adopted, rigidly adhered to, manfully maintained.

But the Bible is to be understood, not literally and logically alone, it is to be understood Practically. Most books are intended to amuse men ; this to instruct them. Most instructive books seek only to make us wiser, this to make us better. The good which it presents is to be imitated, the evil to be shunned.

While no truth can be clearly exhibited till it is understood, spiritual truth, to be understood, must be experienced. Can the mirror, think you, be so held up to nature, that guilt, recognizing its own features, shall stand appalled at the life-like image, and the artist not have sat for the picture ? Can the cross be projected in bold relief, against the dark back-ground of human wants and human woes, the strong pillar that upholds the hopes of man and the throne of God,—and the daring delineator, not first have knelt at its foot in agony, and tested the peace-speaking blood ? No !—as a mere fact in mental science, it is unquestionable, that the successful religious teacher must be a religious man ; his efficiency, in great measure, proportioned to his piety.

When the blind can spread upon the canvass the Last Supper, or the Transfiguration ; when the deaf can weave harmonies into a Messiah or a Creation ;

when the dead, mouldering in their charnel-houses, can wake the dead, — then may the unconverted and unsanctified, through the energies of a truth that is to them a lie, convert and sanctify mankind.

Preaching, then, is the Minister's vocation ; the exhibition of God's word. Not the guesses of ignorance, nor the speculations of philosophy, nor the ornaments of rhetoric, — but the Truth, as it is in Jesus.

*Prayer, and the Ministry of the Word.*

The Preacher is to be a Pray-er. How else is he to learn ? Groping after the light, sounding the depths and scaling the heights of knowledge, now plunging into abysses that are fathomless, now climbing where angels fear to tread, needs he not a Guide ? Can he pursue the devious, giddy, slippery, adventurous track alone ? A study, a Minister's study, prayerless !

But he is to teach. Must not the closet precede the pulpit ? follow the pulpit ? pervade the pulpit ? Hundreds of eyes upon him, hundreds of ears on the alert, he is to grapple with subjects to which no human wisdom or wit is adequate. He must gain access to minds barred to his admission, watchful against surprise, warders on every wall, sentries at every gate, the disturbed heart beating its ceaseless larum.

Lessons trite and threadbare from repetition, he



is to clothe in fresh hues and garbs ; win them a foothold, despite prejudice and pride, bad principles and bad practices, the whole array and retinue of errors and of evils that dispute the ground with truth. He is to give religion a voice to be heard above the Babel of the world ; a voice that can drown the din of the exchange, still the clamor of politics, outreason philosophy, snatch the palm from eloquence, win avarice from its hoard, debauchery from its cups, guilt from its crimes. He is to dispossess the mind of self, recover the will to its allegiance, bind passions in fetters, cleanse the pool of sensuality, sweeten the waters of strife, make man at one with himself and God. And all, without prayer !

No ! no ! But one arm can wing the arrow to the mark ; but one voice secure truth the vantage ground. We may march round and round the beleaguered citadel, blow the trumpet of alarm, bear our torches in earthen vessels ; another's might must crumble turret and bulwark, and let in the ark of God.

And he will be inquired of, to do it for us. Prayer is the condition — the ladder betwixt earth and heaven. Prayer, and the Ministry of the Word. Intercession in the closet, followed by exhortation from the pulpit ; stirring appeal from the pulpit, by melting entreaty in the closet. And continually.

Each day, as if it were the last ;—a race hurrying to its doom ; the sands of probation wasting ; opportunities diminishing ; the fires of the last pyre kindling ; a short hour of hope and mercy, of forgiveness proffered and judgment delayed, and then eternity, and the unending retributions !

If continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word, then never to pursuits conflicting.

II. In the second place, ministerial IMMUNITIES. What does *not* belong to the Minister's vocation ?

He may eat and sleep, as do others. He may seek needful relaxation. He may inform himself on the questions of the day. He may cultivate his taste for letters. He may fill his place in the family, and in the state. He may do anything and be anything which the better capacitates him for his appropriate duties,—not one thing, which interferes with their discharge.

To be specific.

*Money* should enter as little as possible into his calculations. Neither his avarice nor his penury, his tastes nor his necessities, should exact of him an anxious and laborious financiering. The Minister, at least in our communion, has chosen a calling which under no circumstances can ensure him wealth, under rare circumstances an easy competence, under most circumstances a precarious and

stinted livelihood. That livelihood, at least, should be afforded him, without one anxious thought on his part.

What! has he not cares enough already, how best to win a short-lived, thoughtless generation to Christ and heaven, without taxing his ingenuity to discover, whether the next quarter-day will bring him enough of his honest dues to pay his rent and provide raiment and bread for his children?

What! as he stands up to urge men to be reconciled to God, must his face blanch with honest pride, as he looks down on the creditor, whose importunity seems to track him to the sanctuary, whom he would gladly, how gladly pay, and might, but for the debtor who sits hard by, dozing over the sermon, wondering it is not more stirring and effective, and all the while clutching the tighter his share of the meagre, long-coming, soon exhausted stipend.

How a people, any portion of any people — to say nothing of self respect, with any sense of the dignity and value of religion, the difficulty of inducing men to seek it, the danger that all persuasives will be fruitless, — how any such can be content that their spiritual guide and counsellor, their only spiritual guide and counsellor, should be perplexed about his temporal concerns, haunted by visions of beggary and dependence, defrauded, and by those for whose



salvation he labors, out of the means of meeting promptly, easily, his indispensable engagements,—this is beyond my comprehension.

I speak from no experience, far otherwise. You are guiltless, I rejoice to believe, in this behalf. But such things have been, and in this very Commonwealth ; an ineffaceable stigma and scandal on the church of Christ.

From another thing should the Minister be exempt, — *officious intermeddling*.

Any power, to act efficiently, must act freely. The mind must. Compel it to go or stay, be here or there, move thus or so, as another's judgment, or whim, may dictate, and you paralyze its strength. A minister is a Man ; invested with the rights, subject to the necessities of men. Liberty, — a reasonable exemption from uncalled for, unwarrantable interference, — is as essential to him, as to any. When you can engage a clerk, fitted by long training for his duties, to take charge of your accounts, you meanwhile to stand over his shoulder and thoughtfully suggest precisely how he shall dot his i's and cross his t's ; — when you can engage a captain to navigate your vessel to the Indies, he a master of his profession, the best of compasses and charts at his command, you to specify beforehand when this sail shall be reefed and that be furled, this rope slackened, and that tightened, — then, and not

till then, should you, or any, look for an able and educated Minister, to be hung in chains, more a mummy than a man, or to drag his fetters after him, as ignorance and presumption may see fit to dictate.

One of two things must happen. The pulpit must be shorn of its noblest ornaments ; religious services, pastoral and ministerial, devolved on mediocrity and dullness ; or, our churches and societies, awake at last to their true interest, must see to it, that the men, whom and whom alone they have authorized and empowered to do these duties, be allowed to do them, be protected in doing them, doing them as their own best judgment and wisdom dictate, unawed, untrammelled, by any individual assumption.

From another thing should the Minister be exempt — *unintermitted toil*.

Repose, after labor, is the decree of Heaven. Nature herself, when she has peopled the spring with beauty, ripened its stores with summer's suns, gathered them into her barns, as if exhausted with the effort, pillows her head on the hard earth, under her coverlet of snow, and rests. The brutes, who have toiled through the live-long day, tugging at plough, or harrow, or the lumbering wain, need their nightly couch and their weekly Sabbath. Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labor, until the evening.



To no labor is rest so necessary, as to mental labor. You task the brain beyond restricted limits, overstep the line which God and nature have prescribed as the last outpost of endurance, — and what have you? a madman, or a fool. The nicely adjusted mechanism which serves us as the instrument of thought, demands a care proportioned to the dignity of its high office. The true Minister is, with an emphasis, a thinker.

But it is more care than toil that wastes us. And whose cares gnaw deepest into the spirit? His who must answer for the body, or his who must answer for the soul? Not his own soul merely, or his family's, — a whole people's; that last judgment shutting in every prospect.

Then, the Minister has no Sabbath. Your day of rest, is his day of labor. The fever of the week not remitting, but at its crisis. Needs he not repose? He must have it. Sooner or later he must have it. 'There is no work in the grave.'

Now and then he should quit the field, lay off the iron mail of responsibility, forget if he can who and what he is, steal abroad among new scenes, breathe the breath of flowers, list to the singing birds and the dancing waterfalls. It will enliven his jaded faculties, quicken his lagging pulse, fire his languid eye, embolden his fainting heart, send him back to the routine of labor, another and

a better man. Such is the tendency, may be the result, unless economy, a false economy, should spoil it.

If to the expenses of his journey be added the expenses of his family, and to the expenses of his family the expenses of his pulpit, the longed-for relief, nine times in ten, will be purchased at a cost which defeats its end; makes it, at best, a choice of evils, a temporary respite, and hard on its heels, yet more harassing cares and exhausting burdens. Need it be so? Should it be so? Is religion so cheap a thing, that we must grudge it every dollar and copper we give for its advancement?

From one other thing should the Minister be exempt, — *the reversion of other people's duties.*

He seems, by general consent, a sort of heir at law to insolvent debtors — spiritual debtors. Duties which others should discharge but will not, he must. His own province is, with propriety, assigned him, should be secured to him, be kept clear and clean of all intruders. For that, he may be held rigidly accountable. The blackest of all traitors was a recreant Apostle. Out of his own province, why need he be taxed to supply other men's deficiencies? That a Minister, though his frame were of iron, his lungs and brain of adamant, could meet all the services that a congregation like this, for instance, may

properly demand, is a physical impossibility. Nor if he could, should he. The church is a living body, and each member has its office. The eye cannot say unto the hand, 'I have no need of thee,' nor again, the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' There is work for all. None can devolve his share on another. He does it, or it is not done. Were there the sub-division of labor in our churches, that there might be, each busy at his task, none engrossed in watching his lazy neighbor, much more would be done.

Assign your Minister all that properly belongs to him—the most that he can do with safety to mind and body—sparing him to-day only for heavier drafts to-morrow.

Assign the Deacons their share of the responsibility. They were appointed, at the outset, to ease the accumulating burdens, to give that attention to the temporals which the Apostles were to render to the spirituals.

Then for the rest,—distribute it among the brotherhood. Religion is too much accumulated, piled up on Sabbaths and in sanctuaries, on consecrated persons and in consecrated places. It needs to be diffused. Make more of home religion. Keep the flame bright on the domestic altar. Be a priest at your own board, at your own fireside. Instruct your children out of the oracles of God; talking of



them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Unearth the moth-eaten Catechism. Think not a Sabbath evening wasted, if without its public service, — a third sermon drilled into heads and hearts that have not digested the first or second.

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him; discreet and godly men, the minister's assistants, doing good as they have opportunity, bearing one another's burdens, visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation, against the time to come.

The church should be a bee-hive of thrifty industry, with no drones; each eager to aid the other, all contributing to the common support and sustenance as God hath given them ability.

Far fewer heads than now, fresh from the laying on of hands, the ordaining prayer yet tremulous in heaven, would be committed to the tomb.

And now, in conclusion, allow me to express my fervent desire and prayer for this Church and People, and for my beloved Brother and Friend, whom you have called among you, that you may so relieve him of the burdens alien to his office; — so provide for

his support ; so ensure him against officious interference ; so afford him needful relaxation ; and so divide with him the common duties, — that he, without apology for apathy or remissness, for the neglect of duty or the tame and spiritless discharge of it ; his whole being enlisted in the work ; every faculty, every capacity intent upon its office ; seeking not yours but you, your salvation and the salvation of your children ; his efforts cheered by your friendly sympathies, and made effectual by the Divine Spirit, — may, for long years to come, give himself, continually, to Prayer and to the Ministry of the Word.



## INSTALLATION SERVICES.

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PURSUANT to letters missive, the Ecclesiastical Council convened at the Public House of Mr. Lyman Cross, in Ashfield, December 2, 1851, at 3 o'clock, P. M. Rev. Theophilus Packard, Jr. was chosen Moderator, and Rev. George M. Adams, Scribe.

The examination of the Candidate was conducted in the evening, in the Academy, and was listened to with marked attention by the people whom the occasion had assembled in goodly numbers.

After a unanimous approval of the intellectual and spiritual qualifications of the Candidate, the Council adjourned till the next morning, the 3d instant, for devotional exercises; after which they proceeded to the Meeting-house, where a numerous audience awaited them. The public services, which were interspersed with effective and appropriate music, and were listened to throughout with unabated interest, were as follows :—

Result of Council, Reading of the Scriptures and Introductory Prayer, by Rev. George M. Adams of Conway; Sermon, by Rev. George Richards of Central Congregational Church, Boston; Consecrating Prayer, by Rev. Robert Crossett of Goshen; Charge to the Pastor, by Rev. William A. Hawley of Plainfield; Fellowship of the Churches, by Rev. Edward W. Root of Williamsburg; Address to the Church and People, by Rev. Theophilus Packard, Jr. of Shelburne; Concluding Prayer, by Rev. Henry Seymour of East Hawley; Benediction, by the Pastor.

At the close of the religious exercises, the Council repaired to the Public House of Mr. Cross, where an ample entertainment had been provided by the Parish.

HISTORICAL SKETCH  
OF THE  
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY  
IN ASHFIELD, MASS.

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By REV. THEOPHILUS PACKARD, Jr., of Shelburne.

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ASHFIELD was incorporated as a town in 1764. The Congregational Church was organized with fifteen members, February 22, 1763. The first Congregational Meeting-house was raised in 1766, and removed to another location in 1768. The second and present house of worship was built in 1812. Col. John Ames, of Buckland, had stipulated to build the house, and had nearly completed it, when he committed suicide. The fear of sustaining a great loss by the undertaking, and perhaps some degree of insanity, were supposed to be the causes that led to this melancholy catastrophe. During the eighty-eight years of its history, this Church has enjoyed *eleven seasons* of religious revival, from which have been added to its membership about 430 persons. The first revival was in 1780, and the number added to the Church was twenty-five. The second in 1797, and seventy-one added. The third in 1801, and thirteen added. The fourth in 1807, and forty-six added. The fifth in 1816, and twenty added. The sixth in 1821, and eighty-one added. The seventh in 1828, and eighteen added. The eighth in 1829, and eighty-seven added. The ninth in 1831, and thirty-six added. The tenth in 1834, and from twenty to thirty added. The eleventh in 1843, and fourteen added. The whole number that

united with the Church within one year of each revival, is reckoned, in making out the foregoing additions as fruits of the revivals. In several instances the season of revival embraced parts of two years. The revival in 1821 commenced in the Academy, in October, and continued in the town until the June following. The first preaching enjoyed by the Congregationalists was by Rev. Mr. Dickinson from Hadley. Afterwards Rev. Mr. Streeter supplied them.

Rev. JACOB SHERWIN, of Hebron, Ct. was the first Pastor of the Church. He was ordained the day after its organization, February 23, 1763. He was born April 11, 1738; graduated at Yale College in 1759; was dismissed from his pastoral charge in Ashfield, May 17, 1774; and resided for several years afterwards in the place, and officiated as Town Clerk and Justice of the Peace. He was installed as Pastor of a Congregational Church in Sunderland, Vt., March 18, 1790, where he died January 7, 1803, aged 65. Some singular circumstances occurred in connection with his settlement in the latter place. A lot of land in the town had been given for the support of the first settled Pastor. Two Churches had been formed in different parts of the town, and each wished to have its minister settled first, that he might obtain the land. March 18, 1790, was the day appointed for the settlement of Rev. Dr. Lee, afterwards Pastor in Colebrook, Ct., over the First Church, and of Mr. Sherwin over the Second. Both Pastors were settled on the same day and at the same hour, and the land was claimed for both. "The matter was continued in the County Court for a long time, and a great deal of curious testimony was adduced from the clocks and watches of Sunderland respecting the point in question. At length, with a discrimination which has seldom if ever been equalled, it was decided, that the settlement of Mr. Sherwin preceded that of Dr. Lee about *two minutes*. This settled the matter in respect to the Law, but not in respect to the Gospel. The expenses of the suit were heavy, and the alienation such as could not be healed. Some of the best men left the place, among whom was the father of the late Jeremiah Evarts, Corresponding Secretary of the American Board.—An awful declension followed, and the moral desolation remains yet to be repaired."—See *Am. Quart. Register*, vol. xv. p. 135.

Rev. NEHEMIAH PORTER, the second Pastor, was installed over the Church, Dec. 21, 1774. He was born in Ipswich, March 22, 1720; graduated at Yale College in 1745; was ordained in Ipswich, Chebacco Parish, Jan. 3, 1750; and was dismissed from his charge in that place, in June 1766. He afterwards preached for several years to emigrants at Cape Canso, Nova Scotia. He lived to have two Pastors successively settled as colleagues with him in Ashfield. Being in his one hundredth year at the settlement of his last colleague, he ascended the pulpit on that occasion, and, blind by age and tottering in step, with a tremulous voice affectionately exhorted the people to live at peace among themselves. He died in Ashfield, Feb. 29, 1820, aged one hundred years, lacking twenty-two days. The following epitaph is inscribed on his tombstone, viz.

“Mr. Porter was a faithful minister of Christ;  
 With long life he was satisfied;  
 He fell asleep in Jesus, in hope  
 Of a joyful resurrection and a blessed immortality.”  
 “The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.”

A more full obituary account of him may be found in the Boston Recorder, vol. v. number 33.

Rev. ALVAN SANDERSON, the third Pastor, was installed over the Church, June 22, 1808. He was born in Whately, Dec. 13, 1780; graduated at Williams College in 1802; studied theology with Rev. Alvan Hyde, D. D. of Lee, and for a short time with Rev. Joseph Lyman, D. D. of Hatfield. He was licensed by the Berkshire Association, Oct. 17, 1804, and was ordained as an Evangelist at Westhampton, Feb. 4, 1807. He fulfilled several missions in Vermont and Maine, in the employ of the Hampshire Missionary Society, previous to his settlement in Ashfield. In 1814 he was attacked with hemorrhage of the lungs, and was obliged to suspend his pastoral labors. His feeble health led to his dismissal, Jan. 3, 1816. During the time of his inability to preach, he originated and superintended a Grammar school in Ashfield, which was afterwards incorporated as “Sanderson Academy.” He died June 22, 1817, on the anniversary of his installation, aged 36. His remains sleep by those of his aged predecessor, and near the sanctuary.

“Mr. Sanderson’s life was comparatively short, yet long



enough to produce, for the instruction and comfort of his relations and acquaintance, an example of Christian piety and ministerial fidelity, displaying the power of grace and the excellence of religion. His person was rather below the middle stature, his temper was mild, his manners affable, rather distinguished for gentleness and courtesy to all. \* \* \* \* His application to study was that of a man searching for truth, such as will make men wise unto salvation. His mode of sermonizing was clear and convincing in the exhibition of doctrine, though not fascinating in style or manner. In all departments of his sacred employment, he was serious and judicious, desiring to leave a good impression on those with whom he was conversant. His brethren in the ministry will witness, that in his intercourse with them he was always conciliating and instructive. He possessed a tenderness, a sensibility, and freedom of address, eminently adapted to the offices of friendship, and the enjoyments of social life. Among his people he was serious, familiar, sympathetic and obliging; was much in their society, a large proportion of his time being spent in parochial visits, which were so divided among the scattered population of his parish, that they showed the interest which all had in his affections. For these purposes he had more leisure than most clergymen, resulting from his freedom from domestic cares.

“ Although his salary was small, so well was it managed by prudence and economy, that, together with some little patrimony, it enabled him to procure a decent library, to be liberal in deeds of charity, and to accumulate something for appropriation to such objects as he wished to patronize. As his near relations were above want, he considered himself at liberty to devote his property to public uses. Accordingly it was principally disposed of in the following bequests, viz : To the Church in Ashfield, to purchase a Bible, twenty dollars; to the Religious Society with which he had been connected, for the support of a Pedo-Baptist Congregational minister, four hundred dollars; to the Hampshire Missionary Society, two hundred dollars; to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, three hundred dollars. The remainder of his estate he committed to the care and management of Trustees, for the continuance of the school which he had begun under encouraging auspices. This last item is expected to amount to fifteen hundred or two thousand



dollars. Thus did he finish his stewardship on earth; having recognized his relationship to the dust, and commended his spirit to the mercy of that God who gave it, in the assurance that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust." For a more full account of his life, see volume xiv. of the *Panoplist and Missionary Herald* for 1818, p. 393.

Rev. THOMAS SHEPARD was the fourth Pastor, and was ordained over the Church June 16, 1819. He was born in Norton in 1792; graduated at Brown University in 1813; and finished his theological course at Andover in 1816. He was dismissed, May 8, 1833, from his pastoral charge in Ashfield, and was for several years employed as an agent of the American Bible Society in New England; and was settled as Pastor of the Congregational Church in Bristol, R. I., April 30, 1835, where he still remains.

Rev. MASON GROSVENOR was the fifth Pastor, and was settled over the Church May 9, 1833, the day after Mr. Shepard's dismissal. He was born in Craftsbury, Vt., in 1800; graduated at Yale College in 1827; and studied theology at New Haven, Ct. He was ordained as an Evangelist at Guilford, Ct., March 22, 1831. He was dismissed from his pastoral charge in Ashfield, July 16, 1835. He was installed over the Church in Sharon, Ct., September 28, 1836; was afterwards installed over the Church in Hudson, Summit County, Ohio, December 22, 1840; and since 1848 has been an agent for the Society in behalf of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, and now resides at New Haven, Ct.

Rev. BURR BALDWIN was the sixth Pastor, and was installed over the Church April 20, 1836. He was born in Weston, Ct., in 1789; graduated at Yale College in 1809; and finished his theological course at Andover in 1813. Previous to his settlement in Ashfield, he was settled as Pastor in Montrose, Penn.; was installed as Pastor in New Hartford, Ct., February 17, 1830; and was dismissed from his pastoral charge in Ashfield, in September, 1838. He has since been employed as a teacher in Newark, N. J.; and now preaches as a stated supply in Brooklyn, Penn.

REV. SERENO D. CLARK was the seventh Pastor, and was ordained over the Church, June 11, 1840. He was born in Southampton, in 1809 ; graduated at Amherst College in 1835 ; and pursued his theological studies in part at Andover. He was dismissed from his pastoral charge in Ashfield, April 22, 1851 ; and was installed over the Church in Lee, June 11, 1851, where he now preaches.

REV. WILLIAM H. GILBERT is the eighth Pastor, and was installed over the Church, December 3, 1851. He was born in Weston, Ct., in 1817 ; spent his early life in Colebrook in that State ; graduated at Yale College in 1841 ; studied theology at Andover and New Haven ; and previous to his settlement in Ashfield, had been Pastor of a Church in Westminster, Vt.

The average length of the pastorate of the first seven Pastors in Ashfield, is about *eleven years*. All but one of this number were dismissed.

From this town has originated a larger number of Orthodox Congregational Ministers of the gospel, than from any other town in Franklin County. About *one hundred and thirty ministers* of this denomination have been born in the County. Ashfield is the native place, and was the residence, in early life, of *seventeen* of this number. A brief notice of them is subjoined.

*Rev. Rufus W. Bement* studied medicine, practiced as a physician for a time, obtained his education at the Rensselaer Institution in Troy, N. Y. ; and now preaches in Tiffin City, Ohio.

*Rev. William Bement* graduated at Dartmouth College in 1828 ; was ordained as Colleague Pastor with Rev. Payson Wiliston, over the Church in Easthampton, October 17, 1833 ; and is now a Pastor in Elmira, N. Y.

*Rev. John Cross* is a preacher in Illinois.

*Rev. Anson Dyer* was employed as a teacher and laborer by the American Board among the Choctaw Indians, from 1820 for about eight years. He then studied theology with Rev. Moses Hallock, of Plainfield, and was licensed to preach in 1829, and for several years supplied the Church in West Hawley, where he

was ordained as an Evangelist, April 21, 1831. He was deposed from the ministry for unministerial conduct, March 26, 1834.

*Rev. Alvah Lilley* graduated at Williams College in 1824; pursued theological studies two and a half years at Auburn Seminary; was ordained as an Evangelist at Franklin, N. Y., July 15, 1829; was installed as a Pastor in Newfield, N. Y., June 11, 1835; and has supplied the Churches in Columbus, N. Y., Newfield, N. Y., Edmeston, N. Y., and Bethel, N. Y. He now preaches in Hartland and Pewaukie, Wisconsin, in the employ of the American Home Missionary Society.

*Rev. Elijah Paine* graduated at Amherst College in 1823; studied theology with Rev. Heman Humphrey, D. D., of Amherst College; was ordained over the Church in Claremont, N. H., April, 1, 1829, where he remained about five years; was installed over the Church in West Boylston, November 13, 1834; and died while Pastor of the Church in the latter place, September 14, 1836, aged 38. "Soon after his installation at West Boylston, a powerful and extensive revival commenced, which required exertions to meet the crisis, greater than his feeble health would permit. The good of his people and the glory of God, were the all-absorbing objects which occupied his whole soul. The efforts were too great for his constitution; they accelerated the disease which suddenly terminated his valuable life. Though endeared to his family, friends, and society, death checked the career of his extensive usefulness in the midst of his days. He ranked high among his acquaintance, as a scholar, as a theologian, a man of sound judgment, correct principles, fervent piety, unimpeachable integrity. He possessed that independence and moral courage, that he was not afraid nor ashamed to go wherever his duty called. Rarely has occurred an occasion, where deeper sympathy and mourning were manifested, than when the solemn group consigned his mortal remains to the tomb."—See *Am. Quart. Register*, vol. x. for 1837, p. 143.

*Rev. John C. Paine* was ordained over the Church in Rehoboth, June 6, 1838. He received the honorary degree of A. M. from Amherst College in 1843. He was installed over the First Church in Gardner, January 12, 1848, where he now preaches.

*Rev. William P. Paine* graduated at Amherst College in 1827; was a tutor from 1829 to 1831 in the College; finished his theological course at Andover in 1832; and was ordained as



Pastor of the Church in Holden, December 24, 1833, where he now preaches.

*Rev. Melzar Parker* graduated at Amherst College, in 1838; has been a preacher in Oriskany, N. Y., Elizabethtown, N. Y., and Long Lake, N. Y., and now preaches in Wegogea, Wisconsin.

*Rev. Samuel Parker* graduated at Williams College in 1806; studied theology with Rev. Theophilus Packard, D. D., of Shelburne; was licensed by Franklin Association in 1808; finished his theological studies at Andover in 1810; was employed several years by the Massachusetts Domestic Missionary Society in Steuben and Alleghany Counties, N. Y.; was settled over the Church in Danby, N. Y., Dec. 1812, and left that place in October, 1827; was settled in Fabius, N. Y., October 22, 1828; was settled in Apulia, N. Y., in 1831; was settled in Middlefield, July 11, 1832, and dismissed May 23, 1833; was employed a year as agent for the Theological Seminary at Auburn, N. Y.; made an exploring tour under the direction of the American Board through Oregon in 1835, 1836, and 1837, an account of which he published in a volume of 371 pages; and for several years past has resided in Ithaca, N. Y.

*Rev. Charles S. Porter*, a grandson of Rev. Nehemiah Porter, graduated at Amherst College in 1827; finished his theological course at Andover in 1831; was ordained Pastor of the Church in Gloucester Harbor, August 1, 1832; was installed as Pastor of a Church in the city of New York, June 19, 1835; was settled over a Church in Utica, N. Y., March 23, 1842; and became Pastor of the Church of the Pilgrims in Plymouth, May 25, 1845, where he now preaches.

*Rev. Freeman Sears* graduated at Williams College in 1804; studied theology with Rev. Theophilus Packard, D. D., of Shelburne; was licensed by Franklin Association in 1805; was ordained Pastor of the Church in Natick, January 1, 1806; being in feeble health, sailed for Savannah, Geo., in December, 1810, and returned in June following, and died June 30, 1811, aged 32.

*Rev. Oliver M. Sears* graduated at Williams College in 1842; studied theology at the Windsor Hill Seminary; and was settled over the Church in Dalton, September 29, 1847, where he now preaches.



*Rev. Preserved Smith* graduated at Brown University in 1786 ; studied theology with Rev. John Emerson of Conway ; was ordained Pastor of the Church in Rowe, in November, 1787 ; was dismissed from his pastoral charge in May, 1804 ; was installed Pastor in Mendon, October 2, 1805, and dismissed from his charge there, October 20, 1812 ; was re-installed as Pastor at Rowe, December 2, 1812, and dismissed from his charge there, in July 1832 ; and died in Warwick, August 15, 1834, aged 75. Mr. Smith was reputed as an Orthodox preacher for about thirty years, so far, that his Church was in fellowship with Orthodox churches, and he was in fellowship with Orthodox ministers. He became, however, a Unitarian, and withdrew from Franklin Association, February 9, 1821.

*Rev. Preston Taylor* was ordained Pastor of the Church in Barnard, Vt., November 3, 1830 ; was settled in Westminster West, Vt., April 1, 1835 ; was settled in Stratford, Vt., January 11, 1836 ; has preached in Waitsfield, Vt., and Berkshire East, Vt. ; and now preaches in Sheldon, Vt.

*Rev. Morris E. White* graduated at Dartmouth College in 1828 ; finished his theological course at Andover in 1831 ; and was ordained Pastor of the Church in Southampton, June 20, 1832, where he now preaches.

*Rev. Francis Williams* graduated at Williams College in 1838 ; and was ordained Pastor of the Church in Eastford Parish, Ashford, Ct., September 22, 1841, where he now preaches.





